

# Information Operations In Senegal

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**Editorial Abstract:** Colonel Wardini notes information technology is slowly making inroads in Senegal. As a result, IO efforts focus on support to public affairs, civil-military operations, and defense support to public diplomacy. Psychological operations and winning hearts and minds are implied in such an approach. Of special interest to the US is that China has announced its intention to finance the final steps of setting up Senegal's government Intranet.

## Introduction

Information is a strategic resource, vital to national security. Military operations depend on information and information systems for many simultaneous and integrated activities. Since the 1960s, there have been extraordinary improvements in the technical means of transmission, protection, collection, storage, and analysis of data, which have allowed significant improvements in the exploitation of the information domain.

Information Operations is an evolving discipline within the military. It has emerged from earlier concepts originating in the 1990s and takes into account lessons learned from the Gulf War(s), phenomena such as the so-called "CNN Effect," and the enormous advances in information technology. Today Germany leads a NATO multinational effort on developing information operations as an integrating function/joint mission area within the military, called the "Multinational Information Operations Experiment" (MNIOE).

This concept of information operations is somewhat new to most military experts. However, it is accepted worldwide that the instantaneous capability of transmitting information today is a serious issue for all, and that a "hot talking image" is worth 10,000 words.

Information operations are defined as "the integrated employment of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt,

corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own." In other words, information operations can be defined as actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own.

The purpose of this doctrine is to provide joint force commanders (JFC) and their staffs guidance to help prepare,

the commander's intent, and project accurate information to achieve desired effects. Ultimately, these should result in differing behaviors or changes in the adversary's decision cycle, which aligns with the commander's objectives.

Military capabilities of Influence Operations consist of:

- Psychological operations (PSYOP)
- Military deception (MILDEC)
- Operations security (OPSEC)
- Counterintelligence (CI) operations
- Counterpropaganda operations
- Public affairs (PA) operations

## Context

With an approximately 90% Muslim population, Senegal is—and still remains—a secular country, as mentioned in the constitution and enjoyed by its inhabitants. Senegal has never undergone a military putsch (coup d'état), and besides the well-controlled rebellion in the south, has never been threatened by any kind of external instability. This sign of stability is unique in our sub-region where the countries bordering Senegal have experienced, at least one time, a putsch. Senegal belongs to the Saharan region, a remote desert-like area, targeted by Islamic extremists as a potential sanctuary for future activities.

## Social Aspect

We can define Senegal's known threats as poverty, drought, disease, political issues, growing Islamic movements, drugs, and refugees. All are internal problems the government has to deal with as first priorities. In other words, today's enemy is no longer the conventional army right next door; well organized and structured, fighting



*Senegalese Forces symbol.  
(Ministry of Armed Forces Senegal)*

plan, execute, and address information operations in support of joint operations. The principal goal is to achieve and maintain information superiority over the enemy.

In order to tackle our topic progressively, one must understand the military capabilities of Influence Operations. They focus on affecting the perceptions and behavior of leaders, groups, or entire populations. Influence operations employ capabilities that protect operations, communicate

for a national cause with all its assets supported by a national engagement. Rather, it is mainly a politically-frustrated opposition, concerned about the way the country is led, that tries to change the leadership for a new start. Such groups hope things can move in a better direction for the benefit of the population, and power for themselves..

In such conditions the national armed forces in sub-Saharan and Central Africa (poorly equipped and lacking resources) are used to fight subversive, wrongdoers, and insurgents, taking armies away from their constitutional missions for a majority of the time. These low intensity conflicts (LIC) fought between armed citizens and national armed forces are equated to peace restorations, in which appropriate force is recommended over excessive force in order to keep the crisis under national control and avoid any internationalization.

In this context, Senegal's priorities are not EW, CNO, OPSEC, PSYOP or MILDEC, but trying to win hearts and minds (domestically)—to kill rumors and restore confidence for a new beginning. The primary objective is peace and reconciliation, followed by consolidation of the peace and national reconstruction.

### **Cultural Aspect**

Throughout this long process, the main actors are internal, as are the issues. Accordingly, we undertake diplomatic action with allies and neighboring countries, to help solve the crisis before it pours over to the sub region and ends up as a source of instability on the continent. The African Union's leadership is also highly committed to crisis resolution through dialogue and talks, which reminds one of Africa's deep rooted oral tradition of searching for peace, stability, and prosperity.

### **Senegal's Definition and Understanding of IO**

Since its independence in 1960, Senegal has chosen to exercise its defense through recognition of economic realities and solidarity with neighboring countries, in order to fully carry out its assigned missions. Senegal, land of the famous



*Senegalese and US leaders discuss West African security.  
(Defense Link)*

“Tirailleurs Sénégalais,” is a peaceful nation, highly committed to justice and democracy. These values serve as the basis of its current stability.

Senegal believes the definition of IO implies a high degree of technologically-oriented components that are not available in most developing countries. In such states, passive measures like 3rd generation equipment and oral procedures are still the armed forces' only available tools to collect and transmit information in the field.

In Senegal, the different functions listed in the definition of IO are not yet integrated. In fact, they are supporting each other, but as a whole do not belong to a specific cell.

Senegal's armed forces understand information operations as the employment of all means to negatively influence adversary decision-making, while protecting friendly forces decision-making. However, apart from passive measures under the management of the Signal Directorate, and classic intelligence collection and transmission procedures, Senegal presently focuses on three military functions specified as related capabilities for information operations. These capabilities are: public affairs (PA); civil-military operations (CMO); and defense support to public diplomacy. All of these make significant contributions to the successful execution of Senegal's military missions. Thus, one can see how and why Senegal's definition of information operations

is very specific, as well as how it uses the above mentioned functions when deployed. These IO-related capabilities form the bulk of our “Army Nation” concept, which is essentially oriented towards promoting Senegal's image by “winning hearts and minds.”

In fact, public affairs operations play a major role in Senegal's line of defense against adversary propaganda and disinformation. PA is essential, and credible public affairs operations are necessary to support the commander's mission. Senegal's Military Department of Communication (DIRPA) understands this very well, which is why informing domestic and international audiences is considered crucial when hunting for support. The military conducts such activities in coordination with information operations liaisons. While intents differ, PA and information operations ultimately support the dissemination of information, themes, and messages adapted to their audiences. For instance, PA contributes to the achievement of military objectives, by countering adversary misinformation and disinformation through the publication of accurate information. DIRPA does this very efficiently. PA also assists OPSEC by ensuring that the media are aware of the implications of premature release of information. In this domain, the armed forces have established credible relationships with the media that profit each party (press releases, statements, briefings, exchange of trainees, seminars,

organizing facilities). Media are sometimes invited to the front lines to cover military operations, through “embedding” ground rules established by the designated PA staff. In liaison with the ground commander’s staff, DIRPA provides ways to get friendly messages to the target audience.

In the civil military operations (CMO) field, the armed forces help to improve the welfare of the population by taking part in the country’s social and economic development. Accordingly, commanders conduct CMO to address the root causes of instability, to assist in reconstruction after a conflict or disaster, and to conduct other military operations independently—but in support of—national security objectives. CMO, by their nature, affect public perceptions in their immediate vicinity. Distribution of information about CMO efforts through PA and PSYOP can affect the perceptions of a broader audience, and favorably influence key groups or individuals. That is why we exercise our heartfelt concept of ‘Army-Nation,’ meant to assess the participation of the Senegalese armed forces in the country’s development, with 100% involvement in the following functions:

- The national integration function, exercised through military enrollment/conscription, a major factor in national cohesion assisted by the establishment of a civic (national) service more accessible for our youth;
- The economic function, reflecting countless Engineer Corps actions (the construction of bridges, ferries, wells, etc.), along with the involvement of the Air Force (MedEvac, transport of VIPs) and the Navy (marine resources protection);
- The social function which is the sole responsibility of the Health Directorate and is the backbone of public health.

The Senegalese armed forces, as a whole, take part in youth activities (sports and other activities), and play a very important role in the contingency rescue plan, known as Plan ORSEC (Rescue Operations Plan). The military health benefit institution, known as “Mutuelle des Forces Armées,” is mainly concerned with setting up prevention

and solidarity mechanisms that benefit military members and their families.

Our Military Building Cooperative (known as COMICO) is fully oriented towards helping its members become home owners in nice and safe neighborhoods. To better portray the leadership’s concern for the soldier’s welfare, two other major social structures started business in 2006:

- The Injured Military Reinsertion Agency aims to find ways to assist retirees and departing military personnel with their transition into civilian life;
- The Invalids Foundation supports the handicapped and their families.

As far as defense support to public



*Principle cities of Senegal.  
(CIA World Factbook)*

diplomacy is concerned, our military contributes to peacekeeping and helps to enforce stability on the African continent and around the world. These actions are in line with our signed alliances, treaties, and international agreements, and our concept of Peace Defense. This commitment is not in vain; Senegal has a long series of humanitarian interventions that traces the history of our armed forces.

These efficient humanitarian interventions come under the aegis of the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the former Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), and so on. These organizations have honored our armed forces with worldwide recognition for their dedication towards peace and justice. As a matter of fact, our

forces deployed regularly in support of, or parallel to our diplomacy, playing an important role in peacekeeping around the world. In carrying out these noble missions they have given their best, to include the ultimate sacrifice, and always in solidarity with the conflict-stricken countries.

Our achievements during our 47 years of peacekeeping-engagements are highly appreciated by the international community. The sheer number of activities speaks for itself. For this successful cooperative work, Senegal’s Armed Forces were awarded the 2007 African Integration Trophy.

### **Senegal’s Views for Countering Extremist Use of the Internet**

Our country has no precise or objective definition of what constitutes extremism on the Internet. For most people, the term refers to the propagation of extreme views, usually of a political, social, or religious nature through the World Wide Web.

The cheap Internet medium provides easy access to a lot of information and entertainment, every moment of every day. Some terrorist groups use it as a part of their decentralized and internationalized command and control structure. In this highly sophisticated domain, Senegal has a lot to learn and a long way to go. Our armed forces do not have the technology to hunt, track, or counter extremist views on the Internet. Thus, Senegal currently uses no active measures against this threat. The ‘if you see it report it’ recommendation is our only available warning system so far. However, our hierarchy is planning to train some officers in advanced software, to counter intrusion and theft by subversives or wrongdoers.

In addition, Senegal’s American allies are setting up the “ECOWAS Regional INFORMATION Exchange System” (ERIES) throughout the African continent to provide information tracking and sharing among friendly nations. The 2006 exercise Africa Endeavor took place in Pretoria, Republic of South Africa, as a major US-sponsored event focusing on the ability of coalition communication systems to work together.

Other regular computer-assisted exercises in Senegal are part of the “Trans Saharan Counter Terrorism Partnership” (TSCTP), which aims to build partnerships and strengthen the abilities of African governments and militaries. The hope is that such activities will make these nations less vulnerable to terrorist recruiting efforts, and help catch those already using the Web as a safe haven.

Last but not least, the creation of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) will “strengthen security cooperation between Africa and the USA,” thus creating new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of the African leadership. Senegal’s armed forces look forward to such opportunities in this new era of information operations.

At the political level, some believe that Senegalese Public Telecommunication Regulatory Agency (ARTP) countermeasures currently underway are likely to be reinforced in the near future—with dedicated partners. For example, the People’s Republic of China has recently announced its engagement to fund the final steps of setting up Senegal’s government Intranet.

### **Some Recommendations for Countering Net Extremism**

The challenge of Internet extremism urges the establishment of a global network of like-minded individuals, organizations, and opinion-leaders, to promote moderate and progressive ideas throughout the world. Some of Senegal’s ideas on how to meet this challenge include:

- Reinforcement of laws against the distribution of extremist material;
- Updating of Web legislation;
- Actions against relevant Internet service providers, who once identified, should close down extremist sites or face potential prosecution;
- Parental and teacher use of filtering software to block access to sites with particular ratings;
- Promotion of sites containing counter-extremist material, and those promoting tolerance and multiculturalism;
- Building alternative viewpoint Web sites and networks;
- Building networks to isolate and marginalize extremists and their supporters, galvanize the revulsion of the murder of innocents, and empower legitimate alternatives to extremism.

Internet users tend to reinforce their existing perspectives; therefore we must thoughtfully construct counter-extremism websites, to track the very same people who would be lured by radical ideologies.

### **An IO Topic of Importance**

Senegal’s IO experts believe PSYOP is a very important asset for a commander’s successful mission accomplishment. There is no doubt that PSYOP has a central role in the achievement of information operations objectives in support of the JFC in Senegal. However, in order to maintain credibility with their respective audience—which is the purpose of the information operations cell—we recommend facilitating close cooperation and coordination between PSYOP and PA staffs.

Questions Senegal must further explore: Is PSYOP useful or necessary in the African environment? If yes, what is the best way to make it efficient in Senegal (or Africa), considering the lack of sophisticated and technologically-oriented components? What is the best way to counter PSYOP in Africa? Does PSYOP apply to low intensity conflicts like civil wars or rebellions in Africa? We look forward to searching for these answers. 